



COMMANDER  
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# Press Release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Navy's First F-35C Lightning II Squadron Surpasses 1000 Flight Hours**

SAN DIEGO – The “Grim Reapers” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 101, the Navy’s first F-35C Lightning II carrier variant squadron, reached a milestone in November 2014 by surpassing 1,000 mishap-free flight hours in the F-35C.

As the F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron, VFA-101, homeported at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, trains Navy aircrew and maintenance personnel to fly and repair the F-35C.

“I am incredibly proud of the ‘Grim Reapers’ for accomplishing this milestone,” said Cmdr. Frederick Crecelius, VFA-101’s commanding officer. “With each additional flight hour, the men and women of VFA-101 are paving the way for the future of Naval Aviation.”

VFA-101 received the Navy’s first F-35C June 22, 2013, from Lockheed Martin, becoming the Navy’s first F-35C squadron, and completed its first check flight in the squadron’s new aircraft Aug. 14.

“The 1,000-hour milestone not only demonstrates the incredible teamwork of VFA-101,” said Crecelius. “It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the capabilities of the aircraft and how this fifth-generation fighter will enhance the flexibility, power projection, and strike capabilities of the carrier air wing.”

While VFA-101 remains involved in preparations for the F-35C to achieve initial operational capability in 2018, the F-35 Lightning II Integrated Test Force from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 23 located at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, completed its first phase of developmental testing for the F-35C aboard an aircraft carrier Nov. 14. During the initial testing phase, the aircraft demonstrated exceptional performance throughout its sea trails aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

## **Navy's First F-35C Lightning II Squadron Surpasses 1000 Flight Hours 2/2/2**

The F-35C is a fifth generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced sustainment. The F-35C will complement the capabilities of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, which currently serves as the Navy's premier strike fighter.

By 2025, the Navy's aircraft carrier-based air wings will consist of a mix of the F-35C, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Hawkeye, Unmanned Carrier Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike air vehicles, MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopters and Carrier Onboard Delivery logistics aircraft.

Since June 1942, "Grim Reapers" has served as the name used to identify three different squadrons - Fighter Squadron (VF) 10, VF-101 and now VFA-101 - flying various aircraft, including the F4F Wildcat, the FG1-D Corsair, the F-4 Phantom, the F-14 Tomcat and currently the F-35C.

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